

Darwin



The capital of the Northern Territory and the hub of northern Australia, Darwin has a distinctive Top End vibe thanks to its young, eclectic and cosmopolitan population (which is nearing 110,000), its somewhat turbulent history and its geographical setting. With its proximity to Asia, Darwin has long held aspirations of becoming a consequential city of international trade, and with the recent rail link to southern capitals this goal may well be realised.

While the future looks bright, there are lessons and legacies from the past. Darwin has endured total makeovers several times since its settlement in 1861 thanks to more than a few destructive cyclones and a barrage of Japanese bombs during WWII. Rebuilt and revitalised over subsequent decades, Darwin has developed into a vibrant multicultural centre that remains intimate because of its small size, as well as retaining a frontier atmosphere because of its indisputable remoteness from the majority of Australia's population.

Darwin's pre-eminent asset is its proximity to iconic Australia – a less-trampled land of endless horizons, fascinating Indigenous culture, postcard landforms and amazing wildlife. Not surprisingly, Darwin is a major stop for travellers, with a constant flow of them coming and going from Asia, or making their way around Australia. So hang around, take in the vibe and explore the backyard – the famous national parks of Kakadu and Litchfield with their rugged landscapes, idyllic waterfalls and unique wildlife – and discover the people, culture and art of the nearby Tiwi Islands and Arnhem Land.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Mingling and munching among the exotic stalls at the atmospheric **Mindil Beach Sunset Market** (p80)
- Handfeeding the ravenous schools of wild fish at **Aquascene** (p68)
- Romancing under the rigging on a sunset **harbour cruise** (p74)
- Wining, dining and winding down on the waterfront at **Cullen Bay** (p79)
- Joining a party at the pulsating old 'Vic' – the **Victoria Hotel** (p83)
- Reclining under the stars with the film star of your choice at the **Deckchair cinema** (p84)
- Hearing Cyclone Tracy and exploring Aboriginal art at the **Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory** (p65)



■ TELEPHONE CODE ☎ 08

■ Tourism Top End: www.tourismtopend.com.au

■ Darwin City Council: www.darcity.nt.gov.au

ORIENTATION

Darwin's compact CBD sits at the end of a peninsula poking into the turquoise waters of Port Darwin. The main road connecting Darwin to the rest of the world, the Stuart Hwy, swings west through Berrimah, passing Darwin airport, before heading south down the peninsula to become Daly St. From Daly St, the wide Esplanade runs southeast between the city and the leafy foreshore parkland, before swinging northeast through the picturesque government precinct overlooking Darwin Harbour. There are big plans for development of the wharf precinct, which will see the city's focus shift towards the harbour in years to come. For now it's a bit of a backwater with a few attractions at Stokes Hill, and restaurants on Stokes Hill Wharf.

The main shopping, accommodation and dining area is along the parallel Mitchell, Smith and Cavenagh Sts, including the pedestrianised Smith St Mall, and the intersecting Knuckey St.

Long-distance buses pull in to the Transit Centre off Mitchell St in the city centre – and accommodation options start less than a minute's walk away. Most of what you'll

want in central Darwin is within two or three blocks of the Transit Centre or Smith St Mall.

The suburbs spread 15km away to the north and east, starting with Larrakeyah and the Cullen Bay Marina immediately northwest of the centre. From the northern end of Smith St (and the Cullen Bay turn-off), Gilruth Ave continues north through the Botanic Gardens and past Mindil Beach, the setting for the famous sunset market. Further north are the popular inner suburbs of Parap and Fannie Bay, East Point Reserve with its military heritage and the northern suburbs.

Darwin's airport is 12km northeast of the centre, while the train station is about 15km to the east, near Berrimah; see p86 for transport details.

Maps

Destination Darwin & the Top End is a free guide with fold-out city maps at the back. It's available at the information centre and the kiosk in the mall and at various tourist sights around town.

Most bookshops and many tour desks sell maps of Darwin, Kakadu and the Top End.

DARWIN IN ...

Two Days

Check out the art and culture at the fascinating **Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory** (p65) before heading down to Doctors Gully to handfeed Darwin's deepest denizens at **Aquascene** (p68). As the tropical sun sets, join the throng at **Mindil Beach sunset market** (p80) or hop on an old lugger for a romantic **harbour cruise** (p74). On day two, take advantage of the cool morning air to stroll the excellent **George Brown Botanic Gardens** (p68). Then head out to **Crocodylus Park** (p69) to cuddle a croc, before winding down at one of the waterfront café-bars at **Cullen Bay** (p79).

Four Days

Follow the two-day itinerary, then head to the **Territory Wildlife Park** (p96) for a full day of fraternising with fauna. Get back to Darwin to catch a flick at the **Deckchair Cinema** (p84). On the fourth day check out the **Indo-Pacific Marine Exhibition** (p69) and **Australian Pearling Exhibition** (p69), before grabbing a bite at **Stokes Hill Wharf** (p68). Then catch an evening ferry to **Mandorah** (p89) for a show and seafood dinner.

One Week

Follow the four-day itinerary then take a tour or hire a car to experience the wonders of **Kakadu National Park** (p108). On the way to Jabiru feed a jumping croc at **Adelaide River Crossing** (p93), watch the sunset at **Ubirr** (p120), and take a cultural cruise on the **East Alligator River** (p117). Don't miss the wildlife cruise on **Yellow Water** (p116) before returning to Darwin. Also consider a tour of **Bathurst Island** (p92) to experience Tiwi culture and have the opportunity to purchase art and chat with the artists.

The **NT General Store** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 8242; 42 Cavenagh St) has a particularly good range, including topographic maps for bushwalking.

For good maps of the entire Territory try **Maps NT** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8999 7032; www.ipe.nt.gov.au; Land Information Centre; 1st fl Nichols Pl, cnr Cavenagh & Bennett Sts; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri).

INFORMATION Bookshops

Angus & Robertson (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 3489; 18 The Galleria, Smith St Mall) Stocks a broad range of fiction, non-fiction, Australiana and travel books.

Bookworld (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 5277; Paspalis Centrepoint, 48-50 Smith St Mall) Similar range to Angus & Robertson.

NT General Store (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 8242; 42 Cavenagh St) Stocks a good range of travel guides as well as maps.

Read Back Book Exchange (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 0099; 32 Smith St Mall) Secondhand books, CDs and videos.

Emergency

Ambulance (☎ 000)

Fire (☎ 000)

Lifeline (☎ 13 11 14)

Poisons Information Centre (☎ 13 11 26; ☎ 24hr)

Advice on poisons, bites and marine stingers.

Police (☎ 000 or 13 14 44)

Sexual Assault Referral Centre (☎ 8922 7156)

Internet Access

Hotels and hostels generally have their own terminals and there are numerous Internet cafés in the CBD. Rates are usually between \$3 and \$5 per hour.

Some options:

Backpackers World Travel (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 5100; www.backpackersworld.com; Shop 9, 21 Knuckey St)

Global Gossip (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8942 3044; 44 Mitchell St)

Internet Outpost (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 0720; Shop 5, 69 Mitchell St)

NT Tours & Travel Internet Cafe (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8942 3044; Shop 6, Harry Chan Arcade, 60 Smith St)

Northern Territory Library (Map pp66-7; Parliament House, Mitchell St; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 1-5pm Sat & Sun) You'll need to book when it is busy, but it doesn't get cheaper than this.

Roma Bar (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8942 3044; 44 Mitchell St) Popular café with wireless network (see also Eating p82).

Saus IT (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 0622; Shop 10, Paspalis Centrepoint, Smith St Mall; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-3pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) Friendly and helpful,

it offers CD burning and you can bring your own laptop. There's a 'happy hour' (4pm to 6pm) on weekdays.

Medical Services

Chemmart (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 4442; Mitchell Centre, Mitchell St; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun)

Guardian Pharmacy (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 9202; Smith St Mall; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-2pm Sun)

Travellers Medical & Vaccination Centre (Map p64; ☎ 8981 7492; 1st fl, 43 Cavenagh St; appointments ☎ 8.30am-noon & 1.30-3.30pm Mon-Fri)

Night & Day Medical & Dental Surgery (Map pp66-7; medical ☎ 8927 1899, dental ☎ 8927 9418; Shop 31, Casuarina Shopping Centre; ☎ 8am-late Mon-Sat, 9am-late Sun)

Royal Darwin Hospital (Map p64; ☎ 8922 8888; Rocklands Dr, Tiwi)

Money

The four major banks have branches with ATMs all over the city centre.

ANZ (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8982 3510; 69 Smith St)

Commonwealth Bank (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8982 8707; 66 Smith St) There's a handy ATM outside the Youth Hostel on Mitchell St.

National Bank (Map pp66-7; ☎ 13 22 65; 82 Mitchell St)

Westpac (Map pp66-7; ☎ 13 20 32; 24 Smith St) There's an ATM near Chillii's Backpackers.

You'll find a **bureau de change** (Map pp66-7; 69 Mitchell St; ☎ 8am-9pm) at the Transit Centre, plus another at the airport. Other money-changers:

American Express (Map pp66-7; ☎ 13 13 98; inside Westpac Bank, 24 Smith St)

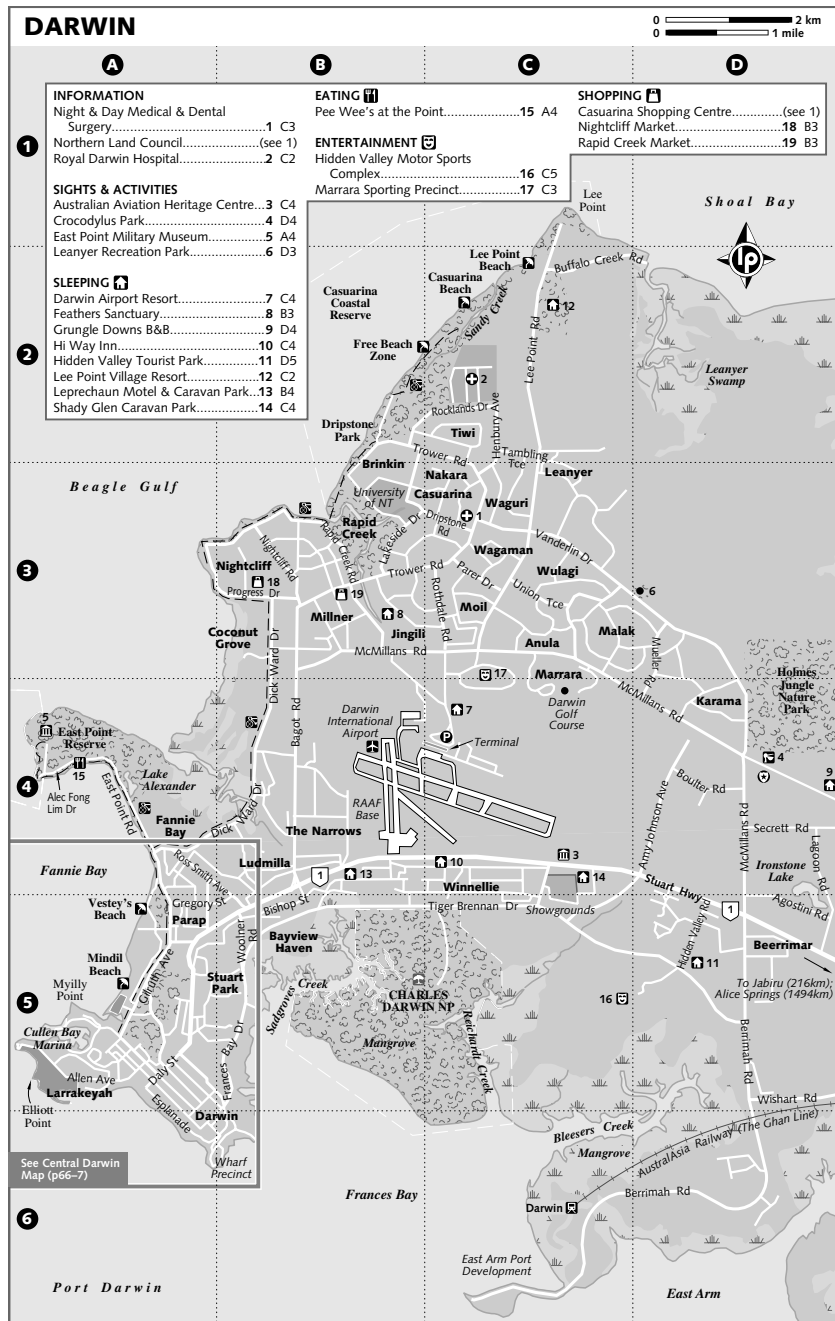
Travellex (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 6182; Shop 1a, Star Village, 32 Smith St Mall)

Permits

If you are going fossicking or travelling through Aboriginal land you'll need a permit. If you are going on an organised tour, the tour company will organise your permits. **Department of Business, Industry & Resource Development** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8999 5511; www.dbird.nt.gov.au; Paspalis Centrepoint, Smith St Mall) For fossicking permits.

Northern Land Council (Map p64; ☎ 8920 5100; www.nic.org.au; 9 Rowling St, Casuarina) Issues permits for Arnhem Land.

Tiwi Land Council (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 4898; www.tiwilandcouncil.net.au; Armidale St, Stuart Park) Issues permits for the Tiwi Islands.



Post

Main post office (Map pp66-7; cnr Cavenagh & Edmunds Sts; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat) You can send packages by sea or air, and there's an efficient poste restante. Before queuing, check the printed poste restante list in the folder on one of the benches.

Tourist Information

Noticeboards and tour desks in most of the hotels and hostels run the gamut of advertisements for tours, buying and selling vehicles, rides and travel companions.

Darwin Regional Tourism Association

Information Centre (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8936 2499; www.tourismtopend.com.au; cnr Knuckey & Mitchell Sts; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) Stocks hundreds of brochures and can book tours or accommodation for businesses within its association. Free publications include *Destination Darwin & the Top End*, published twice yearly, and *The Top End Holiday Guide*, an annual guide to regional attractions. A full range of fact sheets on Top End national parks is also available.

Tourist information desk (Map p64; ☎ 8936 2477; Darwin airport) Free tour and accommodation bookings. It opens to meet all international and major domestic incoming flights.

Tourist information kiosk (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8942 1856; Smith St Mall) A branch of the regional information centre that is only occasionally open.

Travel Agencies

To book or confirm flights, bus and train travel, there's no shortage of agents in Darwin. The following are centrally located:

Backpackers World Travel (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 5100; www.backpackersworld.com; Shop 9, 21 Knuckey St)

Flight Centre (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 8002; www.flightcentre.com.au; 24 Cavenagh St)

SIGHTS

Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory

Don't miss a visit to this excellent **museum and art gallery** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8999 8211; www.nt.gov.au/cdca/dam; Conacher St, Fannie Bay; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun, closed holidays), about 4km from the city centre. It has an eclectic collection, but it's well presented and not too big. A highlight is the Aboriginal art collection, which provides an excellent introduction to many different styles, although its focus is on the art of the Top End. The collection is particularly strong in carvings and *pukumani* burial poles from the Tiwi Islands, and bark paintings from Arnhem Land.

Don't miss the Cyclone Tracy display that graphically illustrates life before and after the disaster. You can stand in a little room and listen to the whirring sound of Tracy at full throttle – a sound you won't forget in a hurry. The cavernous Maritime Gallery houses an assortment of weird and wonderful craft from the nearby islands and Indonesia, as well as a pearling lugger and a Vietnamese refugee boat.

Pride of place among the stuffed animals undoubtedly goes to 'Sweetheart', a 5m, 780kg saltwater crocodile, which became a Top End personality after attacking several fishing dinghies on the Finnis River south of Darwin. The locally focused natural history section is well set out into different habitats.

The museum has a good bookshop and the Cornucopia Cafe is a great lunch spot. Bus 4 and 6 travel close by, or get here on the Tour Tub (see p74) or along the bicycle path from the city centre.

CYCLONE TRACY

The statistics of this natural disaster are frightening. Cyclone Tracy built up over Christmas Eve 1974 and by midnight the winds began to reach their full fury. At 3.05am the airport's anemometer failed, just after it recorded a wind speed of 217km/h. It's thought the peak wind speeds were as high as 280km/h. In all, 66 people died. Of Darwin's 11,200 houses, 50% to 60% were destroyed either totally or beyond repair, and only 400 survived relatively intact.

Much criticism was levelled at the design and construction of Darwin's houses, but plenty of places at least a century old, and built as solidly as you could ask for, also toppled before the awesome winds. The new and rebuilt houses have been cyclone-proofed with steel reinforcements and roofs that are firmly pinned down.

Most people say that next time a cyclone is forecast, they'll jump straight into their cars and head down the Track – and come back afterwards to find out if their houses really were cyclone-proof!

CENTRAL DARWIN

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 Sea Cat (Boats for Mandorah & Tiwi Islands).....112 B5
 Thrifty.....113 E4
 Tour Tab Bus Stop.....114 B7
 Transit Centre.....115 A7
 Travellers Car Market.....116 A7

Aquascene

Hundreds of fish head to shore at high tide each day to feast on the bread at **Aquascene** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 7837; www.aquascene.com.au; 28 Dorsers Gully Rd; adult/child/family \$7/4/20), near the corner of Daly St and the Esplanade. It's quite a 'loaves and fishes' experience to be surrounded by schools of green milkfish (some 1.5m in length) thrashing around and snapping at the soggy morsels. More sedate mullet, batfish, rays and catfish and quite a few other species join in. Children love it. Phone ahead or check in *This Week in Darwin* or *Destination Darwin & the Top End* for feeding times.

Aquascene is an easy walk from the north end of the Esplanade.

George Brown Botanic Gardens

The 42-hectare **Botanic Gardens** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 1958; admission free) showcase plants from the Top End and around the world. Of particular interest are the monsoon vine forest, the mangroves and coastal plants habitat, and a magnificent collection of native and exotic palms. The pleasant gardens are also a splendid place for a walk, particularly in the cool of the morning.

The site was first used by Europeans in the 1870s to establish a fruit and vegetable plantation. Cyclone Tracy destroyed nearly 80% of the gardens in 1974, and it was under the curatorship of George Brown that much of today's magnificent gardens were established.

Many of the plants here were traditionally used by the local Aboriginal people, and self-guiding Aboriginal Plant Use trails have been set up – pick up a brochure at the gardens' **Information Centre** (☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-4pm Sat & Sun) near the Geranium St entry. Free **guided walks and talks** (☎ 9.30am Thu, May-Jun) with Gardens staff cover a number of topics. Check at the information centre for other times.

Over the road, between Gilruth Ave and Fannie Bay, there's a coastal habitat section that features sand dunes, a small wetland and a mangrove boardwalk that leads along the bay to the museum. The Coastal Plant Use walk takes about 20 minutes. All the way to the museum takes about 40 minutes. There are sections of rock-hopping, and parts of the trail (at the base of the Fanny Bay cliffs) are impassable at high tide.

It's an easy 2km bicycle ride out to the gardens from the centre of town along Gilruth Ave and Gardens Rd (gates open 7am to 7pm), or there's another entrance off Geranium St (open 24 hours), which runs off the Stuart Hwy in Stuart Park.

Parliament House & Supreme Court

Dominating the edge of town just south of Smith St Mall is **Parliament House** (Map pp66-7; tour bookings ☎ 8946 1525; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, tours 9am & 11am Sat), dubbed 'the wedding cake', and the adjoining Supreme Court buildings.

The grand parliament building was opened in 1994 and drew much criticism for 'lacking outback ambience'. But, perhaps more appropriately, it owes something to Southeast Asian architecture and evokes the grandeur of colonial buildings worldwide. It's worth going through the security check to wander through the cavernous interior to the secluded café, Speakers Corner, which has impressive views.

The building also houses the **Northern Territory Library** (☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 1-5pm Sat & Sun).

The nearby **Supreme Court** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri) is chiefly of interest for the fine artwork on display inside. A mosaic by Aboriginal artist Nora Napaltjari Nelson lines the floor. Called *Milky Way Dreaming*, some 700,000 pieces of Venetian glass were used in its construction. Also on display is *Kooralia and the Seven Sisters*, a rug woven by Tim Leura Tjapaltjarri that was the centre of a copyright dispute and marked a landmark decision in favour of an Aboriginal artist.

Wharf Precinct

The are big plans for the area around Darwin Harbour, including a new cruise-ship terminal, hotels, restaurants and a wave pool. Part of this ambitious development may be up and running during the life of this edition. For now, the old **Stokes Hill Wharf**, below the cliffs at the southern end of the city centre, is worth exploring. It's a short stroll down from the Survivors' Lookout at the end of Smith St, past the WWII Oil-Storage Tunnels and the Indo-Pacific Marine Exhibition.

At the end of the jetty an old warehouse houses a food centre that's ideal for an alfresco lunch, cool afternoon beer or inexpensive fish/schnitzel and chips, or an Asian dinner.

WWII OIL-STORAGE TUNNELS

You can escape from the heat of the day and relive your Hitchcockian fantasies by walking through the **oil-storage tunnels** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8985 6333; adult/child \$4.50/2.50; ☎ 9am-5pm May-Sep, 10am-2pm Tue-Fri Oct-Nov, Jan & Mar-Apr, closed Dec & Feb). After Japanese air raids destroyed above-ground oil tanks near Stokes Hill Wharf, five oil-storage tunnels were dug by hand into the rock cliff. It was an ambitious project that ultimately failed because of the high water table and seepage, and the tunnels were never used.

Tunnels 5 (171m long) and 6 (78m) are open to the public, and on the walls there's a series of interesting wartime photos.

It's an easy walk from the city centre and the Tour Tub (see p74) stops here.

INDO-PACIFIC MARINE EXHIBITION

This excellent **marine aquarium** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 1294; adult/child/family \$16/6/38; ☎ 10am-5pm) gives you a close encounter with the denizens at the bottom of Darwin Harbour. Each small tank is a complete ecosystem, with only the occasional extra fish introduced as food for some of the predators, such as stonefish or the bizarre angler fish. Box jellyfish are occasionally on display, as well as sea horses, clownfish and butterfly fish. The living coral reef display is especially impressive.

Readers recommend the **Coral Reef by Night** (\$75 per person) show and seafood buffet, held at 7pm on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

The Tour Tub (p74) stops here.

AUSTRALIAN PEARLING EXHIBITION

Housed in the same building as the aquarium, the **Australian Pearling Exhibition** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 1294; adult/child/family \$6.60/3.30/17; ☎ 10am-5pm) has excellent displays and informative videos on the harvesting, farming and culture of pearl oysters in the Top End. You can also experience life underwater inside a simulated diving helmet.

Australian Aviation Heritage Centre

Darwin's **aviation museum** (Map p64; ☎ 8947 2145; www.darwinsairwar.com.au; 557 Stuart Hwy, Winnellie; adult/child/family \$12/7/30; ☎ 9am-5pm), about 10km from the centre, is a huge hangar that's crammed with aircraft and aircraft bits. The centrepiece is a mammoth B52 bomber, one of only a few of its kind displayed outside the USA, which has somehow been squeezed

inside. It dwarfs the other aircraft, which include a Japanese Zero fighter shot down in 1942 and the remains of a RAAF Mirage jet that crashed in a nearby swamp. Short videos on the bombing of Darwin and the mighty B52 run daily and are available for purchase. Free guided tours commence at 10am and 2pm. It's worth a look for the B52 alone, but there are many interesting displays.

Bus 5 and 8 run along the Stuart Hwy and it's on the route of the Tour Tub (p74).

Crocodylus Park

Out on the eastern edge of town, this **wildlife park** (Map p64; ☎ 8947 2510; McMillans Rd, Berrimah; adult/child/family \$25/12.50/65; ☎ 9am-5pm, tours 10am, noon & 2pm) features hundreds of crocs and a mini zoo comprising lions and other big cats, spider monkeys, marmosets, cassowaries and large birds. Allow about two hours to look around the whole complex, and you should time your visit to include a tour, which includes a feeding demonstration.

There's an excellent display on the life cycle and behaviour of crocs, and graphic information on croc attacks. The entry price includes the chance to be photographed handling a baby croc.

The park is about 15km from the city centre. Take bus 5 from Darwin.

Fannie Bay Gaol Museum

The original buildings of this interesting **museum** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8999 8201; cnr East Point Rd & Ross Smith Ave; admission free; ☎ 10am-4.30pm) were erected in 1883, and the grounds housed Darwin's main jail for nearly 100 years. Among its locally famous inmates was Harold Nelson, who lobbied for political representation and eventually became the Territory's first member of parliament.

You can wander around the grounds and enter the old cells and, if you're looking for something chilling, you can see a gallows constructed for two hangings in 1952. The sorry tale behind the hangings is graphically illustrated inside. There's also a minimum security section, used at various times for juvenile delinquents, lepers and Vietnamese refugees. The jail closed in 1979, when a new maximum security lock-up opened at Berrimah.

Bus 4 and 6 from the city centre pass nearby the museum; it's also on the Tour Tub (p74) route.

East Point Reserve

North of Fannie Bay (Map p64), this spit of land is particularly good in the late afternoon when wallabies emerge to feed and you can watch the sun set over the bay. On the northern side there are some wartime gun emplacements and the military museum (below); monsoon vine forest rings the peninsula and the reserve also extends to the surrounding fringing coral reefs and sponge beds. The beach is worth combing for scattered coral fragments and other interesting debris.

Lake Alexander, a small, recreational salt-water lake, was made so people could enjoy a swim year-round without having to worry about box jellyfish. There's a good children's playground and picnic areas with BBQs. A 1.5km **mangrove boardwalk** (🚶 8am-6pm) leads off from the car park. Signs explain the uses the Larrakiah people made of mangrove communities.

Vehicles are permitted in the reserve, and there's also a good bicycle track and footpath.

EAST POINT MILITARY MUSEUM

Devoted to Darwin's WWII experiences, this small, well-presented **museum** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 9702; www.epmm.com.au; adult/child/family \$10/\$5/2\$; 🕒 9.30am-5pm) is north of Fannie Bay within East Point Reserve. Inside there's a 15-minute video on the bombing of Darwin, and cabinets showing various weapons and wartime photos. One curio is a captured bible in Japanese.

Outside there's an assortment of military hardware – check out the ball turret, about the size of a large beach ball, from an American B24 Liberator. The centrepiece is a concrete emplacement housing a replica 9.2in gun. The original massive gun could lob a shell weighing 172kg over a distance of 27km, although it was not installed and tested until 1945, by which time the war was all but over! Ironically, the gun was sold for scrap to a Japanese salvage company in 1960.

The museum is well worth a visit if you're into militaria. It's on the Tour Tub route (p74) and there's bicycle parking.

Milly Point Historic Precinct

At the far northern end of Smith St is this small but important precinct (Map pp66-7) of four houses built in the 1930s. The houses

were designed for the tropical climate by the Northern Territory Principal Architect, BCG Burnett, who came to Darwin in 1937 after spending many years working as an architect in China. The small elevated point was a prime residential spot as it had fine views and enjoyed sea breezes, and so it was here that the top civil and military officials were housed.

The houses are now on the Register of the National Estate, and one of them, Burnett House, operates as a **museum** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 2848; admission by donation; 🕒 10am-3pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sun). There's a tantalising high tea (\$7.50) in the gardens on Sunday afternoon from 3.30pm to 6pm.

Chinese Museum & Temple

The **Chung Wah Society Museum** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 0898; btwn Litchfield & Wood Sts; admission by donation; 🕒 10am-2pm Wed-Mon, Apr-Oct) is a fascinating exploration of Chinese settlement in the Top End. There's also a scale model of prewar Darwin. Follow your senses into the ornate **Chinese Temple** (🕒 8am-4pm).

Cultural Parks & Reserves

Three reserves have been set aside in the Darwin vicinity for their natural, cultural and historical value. All have picnic areas, toilets, barbecues and walking trails.

NPWS rangers lead informative walks through the parks – pick up a copy of *Territory's Parks Alive* at the information centre for details.

CASUARINA COASTAL RESERVE

Sites of Aboriginal and historical significance are preserved in this stretch of fine, sandy beaches (which includes a nude bathing area) between Rapid Creek and Lee Point (Map p64). The rock offshore is a registered sacred site known to the Larrakiah as *Dariba Nunggalinya*. It is said that interference with the rock led to Cyclone Tracy.

CHARLES DARWIN NATIONAL PARK

Declared in 1998, this little **national park** (Map p64; 🕒 7am-7pm) on the shore of Darwin Harbour preserves extensive stands of mangroves and ammunition storage bunkers that date back to 1944. There's a pleasant grassed area with fine views over the harbour and a couple of short walking and cycling trails.

HOLMES JUNGLE NATURE PARK

This 250-hectare park (Map p64) in Darwin's eastern suburbs features a small remnant of monsoon rainforest that is sustained by a permanent spring. This patch of forest is typical of the monsoon forest that once covered much of the Darwin area. Banyan trees and various palms, vines and ferns form the monsoon habitat, while the woodland area is dominated by eucalypts and grevilleas.

ACTIVITIES

Beaches & Swimming

Darwin has plenty of beaches – popular ones include **Mindil** and **Vestey's** on Fannie Bay, and **Mandorah** (p89), across the bay from the city. A stretch of the 7km **Casuarina Beach** further northeast is an official nude beach. Darwin's swimming beaches tend to be far enough away from mangrove creeks to make the threat of meeting a crocodile very remote. However, the potential is always there for the unlucky or unwary swimmer. Crocodile numbers in the Northern Territory continue to increase and this will inevitably lead to a greater probability of encounters between crocs and swimmers.

It's unwise to venture into the water between October and May because of the deadly box jellyfish. However, it is also worth noting that while June to September is considered to be 'safe', Darwin Hospital has records of stings occurring every month of the year!

There's a safe saltwater lake for swimming at **East Point Reserve** (opposite), and a **water park** (Map p64; Vanderlin Dr, Leanyer; 🕒 10am-7pm) at Leanyer Recreation Park in the northeastern suburbs. The main public **swimming pool** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 2662; Ross Smith Ave, Parap; adult/child \$3/1.40; 🕒 6am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun) has a partly shaded 50m pool and a children's play pool.

Cycling

Darwin has a series of excellent bicycle tracks. The main one runs from the northern end of Cavenagh St to Fannie Bay, Coconut Grove, Nightcliff and Casuarina. At Fannie Bay, a side track heads out to the East Point Reserve. For a map of the bike paths see the website for the **Darwin council** (www.darcity.nt.gov.au/Cycle_Paths.htm). For related information see the websites of the **Northern Territory Cycling**

Association (www.nt.cycling.org.au) and the **Darwin Cycling Club** (www.darwincyclingclub.org).

Most hostels hire out bicycles, and the usual charge is \$15 to \$20 per day for a mountain bike. Other hiring places:

Darwin Scooter Hire (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 3266; www.scootahire.com.au; Mitchell St) Opposite Shenanigans.

Kakadu Dreams (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 3266; 50 Mitchell St)

Diving

The Japanese bombs of WWII and Cyclone Tracy have contributed an array of wrecks to the floor of Darwin Harbour. Over the years, coral has encrusted these artificial reefs and attracted a myriad of colourful marine life. On the downside Darwin experiences massive tides, which churn the sea floor and restrict diving times, so you will need to plan ahead to catch the best conditions (only during neap tides). **Cullen Bay Dive** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 3049; www.divedarwin.com; 66 Marina Blvd, Cullen Bay Marina) conducts PADI-affiliated instruction courses and wreck dives throughout the year. Basic open-water instruction costs \$650, including equipment hire. Experienced divers can take a double boat dives for \$160 including all gear.

Coral Divers (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 2686; www.coraldivers.com.au; Shop 3, 42 Stuart Hwy, Stuart Park) is another company worth trying with courses starting at \$480 and double boat dives with gear costing \$150.

Fishing

Fishing is another word for living for many inhabitants and visitors to the Top End, and Darwin is blessed with some great fishing spots. There's no shortage of charter operations taking anglers into the harbour or beyond for some outback barra action or blue-water sportfishing among the islands. Their brochures occupy a dedicated stand at the information centre. You could try **Mangroves & Mudcrabs** (☎ 8945 1432), where a full day of exploring, fishing and crabbing costs \$150 per person (minimum two people) with all gear, lunch and drinks supplied, or those run by the **Tour Tub** (☎ 1800 632 225) from Stokes Hill Wharf, where a half/full day on the harbour costs \$85/150.

Boat and fishing gear hire is also available from several companies, such as **Gecko** (☎ 0439 895 934).

Golf

Garden Park Golf Links (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 6365; www.gardensparkgolf.com.au; Gardens Rd; adult/student 9-holes \$13/8, 18-holes \$18/13; 🕒 6.30am-7pm) is a nine-hole golf course centrally located near the Botanic Gardens. There's also an 18-hole mini-golf course (adult/child \$5.50/3.30) for family fun.

Indoor Rock Climbing

The **Rock Centre** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 0747; Doctor's Gully Rd; bouldering \$11, climbing per adult/child \$25/17; 🕒 noon-3pm Tue-Fri, 9.30am-6pm Sat, 10am-6pm Sun) uses the walls of an old WWII oil-storage tunnel near Aquascene. There is no time limit, and fees include harness and shoe hire.

Sailing

Only members can visit the **Darwin Sailing Club** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 1700; www.dwnsail.com.au; Atkins Dr, Fannie Bay), but you can get temporary membership (free) on the spot. Although you can't charter boats here, there is a notice board advertising crewing needs and detailing the seasonal race programme.

The **Winter School of Sailing** (☎ 8981 9386, 0417 818 257; members.ais.net.au/sailschool; 3hr cruise \$55, overnight cruise from \$110, courses from \$145) sails the harbour in *Zanzibar*, a 11.6m sloop berthed at Cullen Bay Marina. You can learn and participate or just sit and relax. Longer cruises to Port Essington, Bynoe Harbour and Channel Point can also be arranged.

WALKING TOUR

Despite its shaky beginnings and the destruction caused by WWII and Cyclone Tracy, Darwin still has several historical buildings. Their background is detailed in the *Darwin Heritage Walk*, a brochure produced by the National Trust and available at the information centre.

This walk begins at one of the city's most famous landmarks, the **Victoria Hotel** (1; p82), near the southeastern end of the Smith St Mall. The stone 'Vic' was originally built in 1890 and was badly damaged by Cyclone Tracy. It has been extensively renovated and remains a great watering hole.

Continuing southeast along the Mall, the building on the southwestern corner of the Mall and Bennett St only dates from 1981, but it incorporates the colonnade of the 1884 stone **Commercial Bank building** (2), which at the time was one of the finest buildings in the city. The new building houses choice outlets for pearl and crocodile products (see p85).

Crossing Bennett St and continuing southeast along Smith St, you'll come to the remains of **old Palmerston town hall** (3; 1883) on the right; it was built during the gold boom and was virtually destroyed by Tracy. Opposite is the former mining exchange, **Brown's Mart** (4; 1885; p84), which was badly damaged in the fierce cyclone of 1897 and again by Tracy. It was restored on both occasions and now houses a theatre.

Head northeast through the gardens of Civic Sq, where you will find the **Tree of**

Knowledge (5), one of the largest banyan figs in Darwin and a significant historical meeting place; read its story on a plaque nearby. Back on Smith St, head southeast towards the Esplanade, and the **old police station** and **old courthouse** (6; 1884), which were used by the navy from WWII until 1974. They were badly damaged by Tracy, but have been restored and are now used as government offices. A small plaque in the garden bed on the Smith St side of the building marks the spot where the first Telegraph Station stood.

Across the Esplanade, perched on the edge of the escarpment, is the **Survivors' Lookout** (7), with views out over the harbour. The lookout has a number of interesting photographs depicting the Japanese bombing raids. Steps from here lead down to Kitchener Dr and the **WWII Oil-Storage Tunnels** (8; p69).

Heading southwest along the Esplanade, **Government House** (9), built in stages from 1870, was known as the Residency until 1911 when the Territory came under the control of the Commonwealth Government. Initially it was little more than a large room with hand-cut stone walls and canvas roof. The current building dates from 1877 and, although damaged by virtually every cyclone since, it is in fine condition today. Outside is a memorial plaque commemorating the bombing of Darwin in 1942.

Almost opposite Government House is a **memorial cairn** (10) to the completion of the telegraph cable from Banyuwangi in Indonesia, which was brought up the cliffs to the Telegraph Station. This cable put Australia into instant communication with Britain for the first time.

Set back from the Esplanade is **Parliament House** (11; p68). Continue northwest around the Esplanade to Herbert St and the green expanse of **Bicentennial Park** (12). The **Anzac Memorial** (13) commemorates those who fought in WWI and other campaigns. From here it's a pleasant walk by the water to the western edge of the gardens. There are excellent views out over the bay from the **lookout** (14), which is a good spot to catch a colourful sunset.

At the northwestern end of the park, a path leads down to **Doctor's Gully** (15), which has a few signs describing the area's history, but is really only worth a stop when it's fish-feeding time at **Aquascene** (16; p68). A boardwalk leads from the gully through

a small patch of monsoon forest to emerge at Daly St, from where you can get onto the Esplanade and continue back (southeast) towards the city centre.

At the corner with Knuckey St is **Lyons Cottage** (17; admission free; 🕒 10am-4.30pm), an attractive stone building built in 1925. It served as the executive residence for the British Australian Telegraph Company, the company that laid the submarine cable between Java and Australia. It is now a museum, the walls lined with interesting photographs of early Darwin.

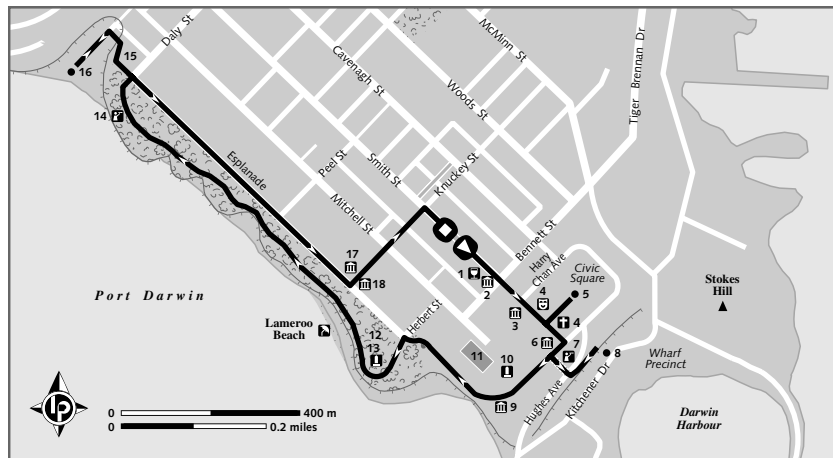
On the opposite corner is the **Old Admiralty House** (18), one of the few 1930s Burnett buildings still standing in Darwin (see p70 for details of the work of BCG Burnett). It was built in 1937 and originally stood on the corner of Peel St. From here you can stroll northeast down Knuckey St and then turn right into the Smith St Mall where a cool drink awaits at the Vic.

DARWIN FOR CHILDREN

Darwin is great for children. At the top of the list would have to be **Aquascene** (p68) where kids of all ages will be thrilled to handfeed torpedo-like milkfish and schools of their more demure cousins – getting a soaking is part of the fun. More fishy delights await at the **Indo-Pacific Marine Exhibition** (p69) where aspiring deep-sea divers can stick their faces into the viewing bubbles and check out life on the sea floor. There's more fun with an educational spin at the **Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory** (p65), where kids can interact with many displays and get hands-on with bugs and microscopes in the Teach & Explore Room.

The **George Brown Botanic Gardens** (p68) has plenty of shade and space, as well as a Children's Evolutionary Playground where curious minds can grapple with plant evolution. Wildlife lurks in Darwin's suburbs, and if you have ever wanted your kids to grab a crocodile, then head to **Crocodylus Park** (p69), which has cuddle-size crocs as well as their scarier parents.

Not too far out of town are a couple of superb wildlife attractions. Don't miss the birds of prey flight show at the **Territory Wildlife Park** (p96), where the kids can also look a 4m crocodile or a barrel-size barramundi right in the eye. Wide eyes and gasps are sure to accompany the jumping crocs at



QUIRKY DARWIN

Blame the humidity. Others do. Darwin weather, so it seems, provokes a powerful thirst that only cold beer will quench. We are not talking boutique, organic ales with a hoppy nose and pretentious label, nor precious pilsners packaged in pretty bottles. Just ya beer that comes in red and green cans – the more the merrier – or huge 2L 'Darwin stubbies'. These brutes of bottles are now a tourist trap, but they have a legitimate history: when brewing was ceased in Darwin, vast quantities of packaged beer had to be shipped overland from Melbourne and the 'stubby' was a 'logistics' solution.

Getting back to all those red and green cans. Over 30 years ago, when the territory boasted one of the highest beer consumptions per capita in the world, it was decided to utilise the surplus cans by building a fleet of ships. Brilliant! The annual Beer Can Regatta (opposite) has become a Darwin institution, a day of family fun and a mega media event. Such silliness is, of course, justified in the name of charity.

If you really want to soak up that sun into every pore, and if exposing it all to the odd Irukanji is of no concern, then **Born Free!** (☎ 8927 1773) runs personalised itineraries to Darwin's nude beach and other 'back-to-nature' spots.

Adelaide River Crossing (p93), where deadly reptiles do their best Flipper impersonation. There are more huge brutes on display at the **Darwin Crocodile Farm** (p89), as well as the rare opportunity to compare an alligator with a crocodile (remember to take notes, as you'll likely be quizzed by the kids later).

You can have inexhaustible offspring climbing up the wall at the **Rock Centre** (p72), which also organises action-packed programmes during the school holidays. Had enough quality time? For professional short-term childcare, look up 'Baby Sitters' and 'Child Care Centres' in the *Yellow Pages* telephone directory.

TOURS

There are innumerable tours taking in the sights in and around Darwin offered by a host of companies. The information centre in the Mall is the best place to start looking and asking questions. You can also book tours and accommodation from here. Remember that many tours run less frequently (or not at all) in the Wet season.

Aboriginal Cultural Tours

Unique Indigenous Land Tours (☎ 8928 0022; adult/child \$80/60) runs a half-day tour that visits significant Larrakia sites around Darwin, an art gallery and the George Brown Botanical Gardens. Other day tours with Aboriginal and wildlife themes include Howard Springs, Litchfield and Kakadu National Parks.

For detailed information on the cultural tours to the Tiwi (Bathurst and Melville) Islands see p92. See p89 for information on the Aboriginal corroborees by the Kenbi Dancers at the Mandorah Beach Hotel.

City Sights

Darwin Day Tours (☎ 1300 721 365; www.aussieadventure.com.au) operates an afternoon city tour (adult/child \$55/45), which takes in all the major attractions, including Stokes Hill Wharf, the Museum & Art Gallery and East Point Reserve, and can be linked with a sunset harbour cruise (\$95/70).

The **Tour Tub** (☎ 8985 6322; www.tourtub.com; adult/child \$25/15; ☎ 9am-4pm, closed Dec) is an open-sided minibus that tours around the various Darwin sights throughout the day. In the city centre it leaves from Knuckey St, near the end of the Smith St Mall (opposite Woolworths), on the hour. Sites visited include Aquascene (only at fish-feeding times), Indo-Pacific Marine and Wharf Precinct, MGM Grand Darwin casino, the Museum & Art Gallery, East Point and the Military Museum, Fannie Bay Gaol Museum, Parap Market (Saturday only) and the Botanic Gardens. Users of this hop-on, hop-off service are entitled to discounts at places along the route – see its widely available brochure for details and for exact times. Bookings may be required when business slows outside the peak season.

Harbour Cruises

There are plenty of boats based at the Cullen Bay marina to take you on a cruise of

the harbour. You'll find their glossy brochures at the information centre.

Spirit of Darwin (☎ 8981 3711; www.spiritofdarwin.net; adult/child \$33/18) is an air-conditioned and fully licensed motor-catamaran that does a two-hour sightseeing cruise at 1.40pm and a sunset cruise at 5.30pm daily.

Three-hour sunset cruises on the historical pearling lugger **Anniki** (☎ 8941 4000; www.australianharbourcruises.com.au; adult/child \$50/30) depart at 5pm and include complimentary sparkling wine and nibbles.

If you want to include a full dinner with the sunset cruising experience, try **Darwin Cruises & Charters** (☎ 8942 3131; www.darwinharbourcruises.com.au; adult/child \$80/55), which operates the 30m schooner *Alfred Nobel*. Its 20m schooner *Tumlaren* does a three-hour sunset cruise (adult/child \$50/33) departing at 5pm, and a BBQ lunch cruise (adult/child \$60/37) departing at noon.

Alternatively, you could just take a trip across the harbour from Cullen Bay to Mandorah (p89), where you can relax at the pub or drop a line from the jetty before catching the ferry back at sunset.

Scenic Flights

Northern Air Charter (☎ 8945 5444; www.flynac.com.au) operates scenic flights over the Top End that include Kakadu and Arnhem Land (\$395 per person) or Kakadu and Katherine (\$525).

Tours Beyond Darwin

For details on organised tours to Litchfield National Park see p101. For organised tours to Kakadu see p117, for the Tiwi Islands see p92 and for Arnhem Land see p128.

A number of operators do trips to the jumping crocodiles at Adelaide River Crossing (p93), the Crocodile Farm (p89) and to the Territory Wildlife Park (p96).

Darwin Day Tours (☎ 1300 721 365; www.darwindaytours.com) offers various full- and half-day trips. The morning half-day Territory Wildlife Park tour costs adult/child \$60/50, while the afternoon jumping crocodile tour costs \$80/65. The full-day Wildlife Spectacular tour (adult/child \$140/110) includes the Territory Wildlife Park, Darwin Crocodile Farm, the jumping croc cruise, Window on the Wetlands (p94) and Fogg Dam (p92). There's also a day trip to Katherine Gorge (adult/child \$160/80).

Australian Pacific Touring (APT; ☎ 1800 891 121; www.aptouring.com.au) does numerous extra-Darwin excursions, including a day tour to Katherine Gorge and Leliyn (Edith Falls; adult/child \$155/80) that includes a gorge cruise, another to Kakadu (\$160/80) that includes the Yellow Water trip, and another to Litchfield National Park (\$100/85).

AAT Kings (☎ 8923 6555; www.aatkings.com) runs similar trips from Darwin including Litchfield (adult/child \$100/85), Katherine Gorge (\$160/80) and Kakadu (\$160/80).

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Darwin has plenty of colour and flair when it comes to local festivals. Most of these take place in the Dry; check with the information centre for exact dates.

May

Arafura Games (2007) Darwin is the host to this biennial sporting event that attracts competitors from Australasia, Asia and the Islands.

Freds Pass Rural Show A very popular agricultural show at the Freds Pass Reserve, McMinns Lagoon, south of Palmerston.

July

Royal Darwin Show This agricultural show takes place at the showgrounds in Winnellie on the fourth Friday of the month. Activities include all the usual rides, as well as demonstrations and competitions.

Darwin Cup Carnival The Darwin Cup racing carnival takes place in July and August of each year, and features eight days of horse races and associated social events. The highlight is the running of the Darwin Cup.

Darwin to Bali Yacht Race Darwin is the starting point for this fiercely contested yacht race, which draws an international field of contestants.

Darwin Fringe Festival Showcases eclectic, local performing and visual arts.

August

Beer Can Regatta An utterly insane and typically Territorian festival that features races for boats made out of beer cans. It takes places at Mindil Beach and is a good fun day.

GAY & LESBIAN DARWIN

The Darwin Pride Festival (www.darwinpride.com) is a fortnight of celebration and partying held in June. Darwin's premier gay venue, Throb nightclub (p84), features heavily in the festivities.

Darwin Rodeo Yee ha! The whips crack as international teams compete in numerous events.

Darwin Festival This mainly outdoor arts and culture festival reflects the city's large Aboriginal and Asian populations and runs for about two weeks.

SLEEPING

Darwin has plenty of accommodation to suit every budget. There are several shady caravan parks scattered around the outer suburbs, while hostels with a party attitude cluster along Mitchell St in the city.

Midrange options aren't hard to find in and around the CBD, and serviced apartments for long-term stays can be found in Cullen Bay and to the north in Stuart Park and Parap. There's also a small selection of friendly B&Bs in the suburban fringe.

Most of Darwin's top-end hotels are on the Esplanade, overlooking Bicentennial Park and Port Darwin; others are found a block or two back in the CBD.

Budget HOSTELS

There's a host of choices in this bracket, most of which are on or near Mitchell St, a stone's throw from the Transit Centre. Most have a courtesy phone at the airport and will pick up from the bus or train stations or the airport if pre-arranged.

Competition is keen and standards are pretty high, so it's always worth asking about discounts for the first night, or for a weekly rate (usually seventh night free). YHA/VIP and other discounts apply. Facilities usually include communal kitchen, pool and laundry facilities, but most places turn on the air-con only at night. Complimentary breakfasts are often available.

Darwin International YHA (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 3995; darwin@yhant.org.au; 69 Mitchell St; dm \$23-25, d or tw \$55-70; 🕒 24hr reception; 📺 📺 📺) At one end of the Transit Centre, this is a clean, popular place with a large open kitchen and meals area overlooking a large pool. The rooms may be getting a little tired, but the staff are consistently praised for being friendly and helpful. It also has games and TV rooms, lockers and an ATM.

Melaleuca on Mitchell (Map pp66-7; ☎ 1300 723 437; www.melaleucaonmitchell.com.au; 52 Mitchell St; dm \$30, s or d \$95; 📺 📺 📺) This modern backpackers has a great rooftop bar and pool area, complete with waterfall spa and

big screen TV. It feels a bit isolated and over-protected from the action down on the street, but that may change when the café and beer garden are constructed next door. The spotless rooms are modern-austere but comfortable and secure.

Cavenagh (Map pp66-7; ☎ 1300 851 198, 8941 6383; www.thecavenagh.com; 12 Cavenagh St; dm \$25, s or d \$55-95; 📺 📺 📺) There's a range of rooms here, all converted motel rooms that are clean and comfortable and arranged around a huge central pool. Dorms are either four-bed or 16-bed and the motel rooms have private bathrooms. It's a sociable place with a perpetual pool party atmosphere and an onsite bar/restaurant that gets pretty rowdy and has good-value meals.

Frogshollow Backpackers (Map pp66-7; ☎ 1800 068 686; www.frogshollow.com.au; 27 Lindsay St; dm \$20, s or d \$60; 📺 📺 📺) This hostel is situated in a lush garden opposite parkland. The atmosphere is relaxed and quiet, and there's a choice of four-, eight- or 12-bed, fan-cooled or air-con (at night) dorms of varying sizes. There's a swimming pool and spa in the garden and a pool table in the common area. This place is only about 10 minutes' walk from the Transit Centre, or you can contact them for a free pick-up.

Banyan View Lodge (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 8644; www.banyanviewlodge.com.au; 119 Mitchell St; dm \$20, s, d or tw without/with air-con \$55/60; 📺 📺 📺) This is a big YWCA that welcomes men and has no curfew. The spacious rooms have fans and fridges, and are clean and well kept; there are two TV lounges, a kitchen and a small spa in a large tropical garden. Weekly and longer rates are also available.

Park Lodge (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 5692; www.parklodgent.com; 42 Coronation Dr, Stuart Park; s/d \$45/55; 📺 📺 📺) A friendly welcome and a quiet relaxing stay can be counted on at this suburban retreat. The small rooms have air-con, fridge, sink and private balcony. There's a well-equipped kitchen, a very spacious TV/sitting room and an inviting pool. It's only a short cycle ride from the city centre. Numerous city buses, including the 5 and 8, run along the highway nearby; ask the driver where to get off.

Gecko Lodge (Map pp66-7; ☎ 1800 811 250; www.geckolodge.com.au; 146 Mitchell St; dm \$20, tw & d \$50; 📺 📺 📺) In a pair of well-worn elevated houses towards Mindil Beach, this small, personable, family-run hostel offers a relaxing

stay a short walk from the action. The original house of the pair has lush gardens and a pool and the better rooms. There's bike hire and a free pancake breakfast.

Chilli's (Map pp66-7; ☎ 1800 351 313; www.chillis.com.au; 69A Mitchell St; dm \$19, tw & d \$55; 📺 📺 📺) Next door to the Transit Centre and convenient to the action on Mitchell St. There's no pool, but it has a sundeck and spa, a pool table, an air-con TV room and a breezy kitchen and meals area overlooking Mitchell St. Rooms are clean four-, six- and eight-bed dorms and basic doubles and twins. There's a helpful tour desk and a number of Internet terminals on the ground floor.

HOTELS & MOTELS

Barramundi Lodge (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 6466; barramundilodge@bigpond.com; www.barramundilodge.com.au; 4 Gardens Rd, The Gardens; s \$50-55, d \$95; 📺 📺 📺) Perched opposite the golf course between the CBD, the Botanical Gardens and Mindil Beach, this is a good-value option wavering between Budget and Midrange. Spotless and spacious, the old-fashioned, louvre-windowed rooms have a TV and kitchenette, though the bathrooms are communal. There's a laundry and a pool lounge area with a BBQ. Room rates drop for longer stays and in the Wet.

Palms Motel (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 4188; fax 8981 4415; 100 McMinn St, s or d \$80-90; self-contained rooms \$110; 📺 📺 📺) The Palms Motel is a comfortable and convenient option close to the CBD. The older-style budget rooms are well maintained and perfectly adequate with TV, phone, and tea and coffee facilities. There's a BBQ area by the pool and limited lock-up parking if required.

Leprechaun Motel & Caravan Park (Map p64; ☎ 8984 3400; fax 8984 3333; 378 Stuart Hwy, Winnellie; dm per night/week \$18/90, s or d \$75, 4-person cabins \$120, unpowered/powerd sites \$24/28; 📺 📺 📺) This complex has a range of accommodation. Rooms and cabins are satisfactory if bland, and set far enough back from the highway to shun most road noise. It claims the title of 'closest caravan park to the CBD' and has a swimming pool, BBQs and grassed, shady tent sites. A no-pet policy applies.

Hi Way Inn (Map p64; ☎ 8947 0979; 430 Stuart Hwy, Winnellie; s or d \$70-80; 📺 📺 📺) This is the first motel you'll pass if you're arriving by road from the south. It's cheap and serviceable and sits right by the busy highway.

CAMPING

There are several caravan parks within 10km to 15km of the city centre. There are discounts for terms of a week or longer, and special off-season rates in the Wet. Prices given below for powered and unpowered sites are for two people. Leprechaun Motel & Caravan Park (left) also has a camping ground.

Shady Glen Caravan Park (Map p64; ☎ 8984 3330; www.shadyglen.com.au; cnr Farrel Cres & Stuart Hwy; unpowered/powerd sites \$24/26, cabins \$100-190; 📺 📺 📺) This is a lush, well-treed caravan park with immaculate facilities, camp kitchen, licensed shop and friendly staff.

Hidden Valley Tourist Park (Map p64; ☎ 8947 1422; www.hvtp.com.au; 15 Hidden Valley Rd, Berrimah; unpowered & powerd sites \$25, self-contained cabins \$80-120; 📺 📺 📺) This is Darwin's newest caravan park, positioned well away from the main road, and it has the appeal of a hidden oasis with grassy grounds, numerous palms and tropical plants and a large pool.

Lee Point Village Resort (Map p64; ☎ 8945 0535; fax 8945 0642; Lee Point Rd; unpowered/powerd/en suite sites \$22/25/28, cabins \$80; 📺 📺 📺) This spacious park, 15km north of the city, is only 800m from the attractive Lee Point beach. Facilities here are excellent with many powered sites having their own private bathroom. The comfortable cabins have share facilities.

Midrange B&Bs

Steeles at Larrakeyah (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 3636; www.steeles-at-larrakeyah.com.au; 4 Zealandia Cres, Larrakeyah; d \$150; 📺 📺 📺) Perfectly positioned midway between the city centre, Cullen Bay and Mindil Beach, there are two rooms in this pleasant Spanish Mission-style place each with a private entrance, fridge and tea/coffee facilities.

Grungle Downs B&B (Map p64; ☎ 8947 4440; www.grungledowns.com.au; 945 McMillans Rd, Knuckey Lagoon; d/cottage from \$100/250; 📺 📺 📺) This rural retreat is still only a short drive from the city. The modern B&B on a 5-acre property is convenient to Crocodylus Park, Holmes Jungle Reserve and Knuckey Lagoon. It has a large pool and is pet friendly.

Other options are covered in the **Bed and Breakfast directory** (www.bed-and-breakfast.au.com).

HOTELS & MOTELS

Darwin Airport Resort (Map p64; ☎ 8920 3333; www.darwinairportresort.com.au; cnr Henry Wrigley & Sir Norman

Brierly Dr; d from \$150; (P) (♿) (♿) This new resort is right by the airport, snuggling into the surrounding bushland. It features several levels of accommodation from fully appointed business suites to rather whimsical-looking, thoroughly comfortable bungalows set around an impressive pool and landscaped gardens. There's an excellent restaurant, Essence (mains \$20 to \$30), and bar, and exceptional service.

Cherry Blossom Hotel (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 6734; fax 8941 3620; 108 The Esplanade; d \$99; (P) (♿) (♿)) This friendly boutique hotel of just 19 rooms represents good value on the Esplanade. All rooms have a double bed and a single plus all the expected appointments. There's no restaurant, but there are numerous options within walking distance.

Mirambeena Resort (Map pp66-7; ☎ 1800 891 100, 8946 0111; www.mirambeena.com.au; 64 Cavenagh St; d from \$160, townhouses \$245; (♿) (♿) (♿)) This huge resort right in the CBD looks a little worn in places, but it has plenty of lush tropical gardens and two impressive pools. All rooms are well appointed, and wheelchair accessible rooms are available. There is a restaurant (mains \$16 to \$30) and café on site.

Value Inn (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 4733; www.valueinn.com.au; 50 Mitchell St; s, d or tr \$99; (P) (♿) (♿)) Opposite the Transit Centre, this central hotel has quite small rooms equipped with a queen-size and single bed, fridge and TV. Two rooms with handicap facilities are also available. Be sure to indicate whether you want a smoking or nonsmoking room.

Top End Hotel (Map pp66-7; ☎ 1800 626 151, 8981 6511; bestwestern.com.au/topend; cnr Mitchell & Daly Sts; s/d \$100/110; (P) (♿) (♿)) At this well-run motel each comfortable room opens onto the pool and garden; and though the hotel has various bars and night spots, the rooms are sufficiently distant to get a good night's sleep. Discounts here during the Wet are very attractive.

Frontier Hotel (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 5333; reservations@frontierdarwin.com.au; 3 Buffalo Ct; d \$140-185; (P) (♿) (♿)) On the northern edge of town, this block of spacious, stylish rooms boasts excellent views, particularly from the 6th-floor apartments. There's a bar and the rooftop restaurant (mains \$25 to \$30) has stunning harbour views across the golf course.

Asti Motel (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 8200; asti1@inet.au; 7 Packard Pl; d from \$130; (P) (♿) (♿)) This large block of motel units is conveniently central

and has clean, if nondescript, rooms appointed with TV, phone and fridge. Family rooms with kitchenette that sleep up to four are also available.

Poinciana Inn (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 8111; cnr Mitchell & McLachlan Sts; d \$135; (P) (♿) (♿)) Poinciana is a block of unexceptional motel units at the edge of the CBD, and there are plenty of restaurants within walking distance. Each room has a phone, fridge and TV. A buffet breakfast is available for \$16.

Capricornia Motel (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 4055; fax 8981 2031; 3 Kellaway St, Fannie Bay; s \$80/90; (P) (♿) (♿)) The Capricornia Motel has tired but clean rooms with a fridge. Avoid the designated smoking rooms. There's a communal kitchen and bike hire and it's handy for the museum and Mindil Beach.

APARTMENTS

There are plenty of serviced apartments in Darwin. Most will give discounts if you stay a week or more, and there are often significant discounts in the Wet season.

Palms City Resort (Map pp66-7; ☎ 1800 829 211, 8982 9200; www.citypalms.com; 64 The Esplanade; motel d \$150-160, villa d \$165-250; (P) (♿) (♿)) True to its name, this centrally located resort is surrounded by palm-filled gardens. The superior motel rooms are worth the extra \$10, if you covet a microwave and value space, while the executive villas with outdoor spa are pure luxury. All villas come with electric BBQs on the veranda. Buffet breakfasts cost \$15.

Parap Village Apartments (Map pp66-7; ☎ 1800 620 913, 8943 0500; www.parapvillageapartments.com.au; 39-45 Parap Rd, Parap; d \$170-225, townhouses \$245;

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Botanic Gardens Apartments (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8946 0300; www.botanicgardens.com.au; 17 Geranium St, Stuart Park; motel d from \$140, apt \$190-300; (P) (♿) (♿)) In a unique and peaceful location adjacent to the Botanic Gardens, the good-value motel rooms and spacious apartments here are surrounded by palms and lush tropical gardens, and there are two fabulous pools to cool off in. Each airy apartment has a balcony, full cooking facilities and a laundry. The three-bedroom apartments sleep up to six, and the best rooms have prestigious views over the Botanic Gardens to the Timor Sea.

(P) (♿) (♿)) This place sits across the road from the pleasant Parap Village, which hosts a thriving Saturday market and a couple of good eateries. Caveous self-contained apartments boast a balcony, full kitchen and laundry. The townhouses comfortably sleep six, and there are two pools and a children's play area on site. Reduced rates are available in the Wet and for stays of seven nights or more.

Marina View (Map pp66-7; ☎ 1800 060 646, 8981 0919; info@marinaview.com.au; 32 Marina Blvd, Cullen Bay; d from \$170; (P) (♿) (♿)) The Marina View welcomes short-term stays in its roomy, well-appointed one- and two-bedroom serviced apartments overlooking the marina at Cullen Bay. Convenient to the restaurants at the marina, it is also only a few minutes' drive from the city.

Alatai Holiday Apartments (Map pp66-7; ☎ 1800 628 833, 8981 5188; www.alataiholidayapartments.com.au; cnr McMinn & Finnis Sts; studio/apt \$150/215; (P) (♿) (♿)) This is a neat complex built around a swimming pool at the northern edge of the city centre. The compact studios and more roomy apartments have their own kitchen and laundry. There's a Chinese restaurant (mains \$10 to \$18), and cheaper walk-in rates are available, as are discounts in the Wet.

Peninsular Apartment Hotel (Map pp66-7; ☎ 1800 808 564; peninsularapts@octa4.net.au; 115 Smith St; s, d or tr \$130; (P) (♿) (♿)) The peninsular offers good-value accommodation just 10 minutes' walk from the city centre. Rooms are simple and spacious, though looking a bit tired, and have a bathroom and kitchenette. There's a bar and shaded pool downstairs.

Top End

Many of Darwin's upmarket hotels are on the Esplanade, making best use of the prime water views across the park. Other options are in the city centre, and keep an eye on new harbour precinct developments. High-season rack rates are listed, though these are rarely charged. Bargains can be had by perusing websites such as www.wotif.com.au, and simply asking about discounts, particularly during the Wet.

Darwin Central Hotel (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8944 9000; www.darwincentral.com.au; cnr Smith & Knuckey Sts; s/d from \$170/220; (P) (♿) (♿)) Right in the centre of town, this is a plush independent with contemporary style and impeccable facilities. Its award-winning Waterhole

restaurant is popular with locals and travellers alike. It has excellent accessibility for disabled travellers and a plunge pool. Valet parking costs \$7 a night.

Saville Park Suites (Map pp66-7; ☎ 1300 881 686, 8943 4333; www.savillesuites.com; 88 The Esplanade; d from \$230, 1-2-bedroom apt from \$260/370; (P) (♿) (♿)) Pay less for city views, more for stunning harbour views in this complex of spacious suites.

Crowne Plaza Darwin (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8982 0000; www.crowneplaza.com.au; 32 Mitchell St; d from \$180; (P) (♿) (♿)) This is one block back from the Esplanade but still commands fine views. It has the full gamut of facilities and weekend deals are sometimes available.

Feathers Sanctuary (Map p64; ☎ 8985 2144; www.featherssanctuary.com; 49A Freshwater Rd, Jingili; d \$275; (♿)) One for bird enthusiasts and nature lovers. Each modern, attractive, timber and iron cabin has its own private aviary, and the setting, complete with waterhole, is distinctly rural despite its proximity to the city.

Novotel Atrium (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 0755; www.novoteldarwin.com.au; 100 The Esplanade; d \$200-260, 2-bedroom apt \$320; (P) (♿) (♿)) The Novotel indeed boasts an impressive atrium. The comfortable, well-appointed rooms are arranged around the verdant atrium, at the bottom of which is a restaurant and cocktail bar swathed in palms and vines.

Holiday Inn Darwin (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8980 0800; www.holidayinn.com.au; The Esplanade; d from \$200; (P) (♿) (♿)) The Holiday Inn chain occupies two hotels on the Esplanade. Prices and facilities are similar in the Holiday Inn Esplanade next door. Rates reduce on the weekend and usually include a buffet breakfast.

EATING

Darwin is the glistening pearl in the Territory's dining scene. The quality and diversity top anywhere else, so make the most of it while you are here. Savour the exotic and innovative creations at the city's top restaurants, or embark on a culinary jaunt through Asia as you investigate the fast, cheap and varied delights that sizzle and smoke at any of Darwin's bustling multicultural markets (see p80).

Cullen Bay, the marina/condo development north of the city centre, has a hip, waterfront dining scene, while the food centre at the end of Stokes Hill Wharf provides cheap and cheerful fish and chips

TO MARKET, TO MARKET

As the sun heads towards the horizon, half of Darwin descends on **Mindil Beach Sunset Market** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 3454; off Gilruth Ave; 5-10pm Thu & 4-9pm Sun May-Oct) with tables, chairs, rugs, grog and kids to settle under the coconut palms for sunset and decide which of the tantalising food-stall aromas has the greatest allure. Take your choice – there's Thai, Sri Lankan, Indian, Chinese, Malaysian, Brazilian, Greek, Portuguese and more, all at around \$5 to \$8 a serve. Top it off with fresh fruit salad, decadent cakes or luscious crepes, before cruising past arts and crafts stalls bulging with hand-made jewellery, fabulous rainbow tie-died clothes, Aboriginal artefacts, and wares from Indonesia and Thailand. Patrons peruse and promenade, or stop for a pummelling massage or to listen to rhythmic live music. An outdoor cinema is set up on the first Thursday of each month the market is open. Mindil Beach is about 2km from the city centre. Bus 4 and 6 go past the market area or you can catch a shuttle (\$2).

Similar stalls (you'll recognise many of the stall holders) can be found at various suburban markets from Friday to Sunday. There's **Parap Village Market** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8am-2pm Sat), where you will find the full gamut of Southeast Asian cuisine, as well as plenty of ingredients to cook up your own storm. **Nightcliff Market** (Map p64; Pavonia Way; ☎ 8am-2pm Sun), **Palmerston Market** (Frances Mall; ☎ 5-10pm Fri, Dry season only), southeast of the city, and **Rapid Creek Market** (Map p64; Trower Rd; ☎ 5-10pm Fri, 8am-2pm Sun), which is Darwin's oldest market, are all reminiscent of Asian marketplaces, with a tremendous range of tropical fruit and vegetables mingled with a heady mixture of spices and swirling satay smoke. Among the fresh produce you can also find book stalls, bric-a-brac and purveyors of everything from sharks' teeth to mango smoothies.

and Asian stirfries, or you could try dangling a line from the wharf to hook your own meal.

Restaurants

Hanuman (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 3500; 28 Mitchell St; mains \$15-25; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner daily) Enticing aromas waft out onto Mitchell St from this sophisticated and innovative Indian and Thai nonya restaurant. Try Hanuman's signature dish of oysters bathed in lemongrass, chilli and coriander or the *meen mooli* – reef fish in coconut and curry leaves.

Café Twilight on Lindsay (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 8631; 2 Lindsay St; mains \$20-30; ☎ lunch Tue-Fri, dinner Tue-Sat) Twilight boasts innovative, fusion cuisine with a European base and tropical ingredients in a romantic alfresco setting. Dine in the lush tropical garden, which sparkles with fairy lights at night. Delightful (and affordable) tapas are served with bread and salad. Bookings are recommended.

Sonsie (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8942 2278; 34 Parap Rd, Parap; mains \$25-35; ☎ lunch Fri, dinner Wed-Sat) This award-winning, fully licensed restaurant is secreted in the Parap Village shopping centre. The elegant cuisine, such as marinated rack of lamb with beetroot fettuccine or chicken and vegetable roulade, can be shared Asian style with accompaniments of rice or stirfry vegetables.

Waterhole Restaurant (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8944 9120; Darwin Central Hotel, cnr Smith & Knuckey Sts; mains \$22-30; ☎ dinner) Refined contemporary Australian cuisine, including delicious steaks and seafood and magnificent desserts, can be savoured in a casual setting with excellent service.

Deck Bar (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8942 3001; 22 Mitchell St; mains \$15-30; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Wash down delicious Asian, Moroccan and European offerings with a selection from the excellent range of wines, many available by the glass, or the 20-odd ales on tap. The lubricated chatter out on the expansive wooden deck is about the latest mobile phones, the boss, the property market or the Deck's first-rate coffee.

Pee Wee's at the Point (Map p64; ☎ 8981 6868; Alec Fong Lim Dr, East Point Reserve; mains \$25-35; ☎ dinner) Pee Wee's has an unbeatable location with sweeping views over the harbour to East Point. Grilled barra, roo and eye fillet top the Asian-influenced menu. Bookings are recommended.

Sawasdee (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 3335; Shop 1, 52 Marina Blvd, Cullen Bay; mains \$10-20; ☎ lunch & dinner) Seafood and vegetables dominate at this waterfront eatery, which has well-executed Thai stirfries and curries, plus a few Malaysian dishes, all served up in a great position overlooking the marina.

Crustaceans (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 8658; Stokes Hill Wharf; mains \$25-50; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat) This highly regarded seafood restaurant perches on the end of Stokes Hill Wharf, where diners can enjoy sunset and views over Frances Bay. Fresh fish, mud crabs, lobster, crocodile and oysters grace the tables and are accompanied by a first-rate wine list.

Salvatore's (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 9823; 21 Knuckey St; mains \$12-20; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This tiny Italian restaurant has a huge, reasonably priced menu of cooked breakfasts, coffee-and-cake deals and gourmet pizzas. The generous offerings, children's menu and inexpensive wine by the glass make it a good casual family eatery.

Vietnam Saigon Star (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 1420; Shop 9, 60 Smith St; mains \$10-20; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun) A typical Vietnamese eatery with a typically extensive menu including a dozen sauces multiplied by beef, pork, chicken and seafood. Vegetarians are well catered for and there are good-value lunch specials for around \$10.

Tim's Surf 'n' Turf (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 1024; 10 Lithfield St; mains \$10-20; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner daily) Tim's is a very relaxed, informal place secreted in a backstreet in the CBD. Steak, seafood, pasta, chicken and croc feature on the menu that doubles as an order form

(pencil provided). Lunch is great value with all dishes just \$10.

Pubs

A few pubs entice backpackers off the pavement with free barbecues and cheap meals to soak up the beer. More digestible pub grub is also on offer, though it usually features a lot of meat and chips.

Rorke's Drift (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 7171; 46 Mitchell St; mains \$15-25; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Features traditional pub fare of steaks and pasta and 'pie of the day', all in cheerful proportions. It also boasts crisp-based pizza, limited vegetarian alternatives and a popular Sunday roast with Yorkshire pudding.

Shenanigans (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 2100; cnr Peel & Mitchell Sts; snacks \$4-10, meals \$11-25; ☎ lunch & dinner) Shenanigans is Darwin's original and ever-popular Irish-theme pub next to the YHA hostel. It serves cold Guinness and generous pub grub, including Top End steaks and barra and a few Irish meals such as a hearty Irish stew.

Lizards Bar & Grill (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 6511; Top End Hotel, cnr Mitchell & Daly Sts; mains \$15-25; ☎ lunch & dinner) The leafy outdoor decking at Lizards is a good place to devour T-bone, chicken parmigiana or barra fillet with an icy cold beer or chardonnay.

Cafés

Moorish Café (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8991 0010; 37 Knuckey St; mains \$20-30; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Be seduced by the aromas emanating from this divine café fusing African, Mediterranean and Middle Eastern delights. Browse tantalising tapas (\$3 to \$6); try the tagine of the day or the vegetarian paella, or splurge, as we did, on the Portuguese seafood hotpot with homemade bread. There are \$10 lunch specials, classical Spanish guitar on Tuesdays and belly dancers on Saturday nights.

Buzz Café (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 1141; The Slipway, Cullen Bay; mains \$16-30; ☎ lunch & dinner) This chic café/bar/restaurant furnished in Indonesian teak and Mt Bromo lava has a great multilevel deck and makes a lovely, sunny spot for an afternoon drink, followed by another, and another. The meals are Mod Oz, with some excellent salads and dishes to share. Check it out – all will be revealed in the men's toilets.

Café Uno (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8942 2500; 69 Mitchell St; mains \$15-25; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Jammed

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Ducks Nuts Bar & Grill (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8942 2122; 76 Mitchell St; mains \$15-25; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This slick bistro delivers some clever fusion of Top End produce with that Asian/Mediterranean blend we like to claim as Modern Australian. The gonads may be poultry but the dishes are hefty and good value. The pan-fried barra on jasmine rice topped with tender calamari and a pungent pesto sauce perhaps took fusion beyond the laws of gourmet physics, but it washed down well with an icy Tasmanian beer and left no room for surveying the clever desserts. The red Thai duck shank and banana curry hinted at a continuing obsession with Daffy's nether regions. The glossy Bar Espresso coffee shop in the Ducks Nuts complex delivers good brekkies and caffeinated brews, while Tzars Vodka Bar is for modish lounge lizards and occasional live entertainment after 10pm.

into the busy backpacker zone, Uno's interior is sophisticated and arty, and the terrace is great for people-watching. Generous pastas, delicious pizzas and blackboard specials are served with gusto, accompanied by a good wine selection and the requisite rich coffee and desserts.

Yots Cafe (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 4433; 54 Marina Blvd, Cullen Bay; mains \$10-25; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Busy and efficient with a great deck overlooking the marina, Yots boasts an extensive menu of mostly Mediterranean renditions of quality seafood, steaks, chicken and kangaroo. There are also scrumptious wood-fired pizzas, an exceptional wine list and superb coffee.

Relish (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 1900; Shop 1, 35 Cavenagh St; ☺ breakfast & lunch Mon-Fri) A groovy little café with a good dose of acoustic music, art books and magazines. Pierced patrons gaze at walls plastered with ads for live music and theatre, and devour gourmet melts, ciabattas, focaccias and good coffee or spicy chai.

Cornucopia Café (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 1002; Conacher St, Fannie Bay; mains \$10-20; ☺ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun) This deservedly popular café appended to the museum (hence the opening hours) is a great lunch spot. The menu is varied – including tempting focaccias, pastas, burgers, coffee-and-cake deals and cooling iced coffee/chocolate. Enjoy it out on the deck or in the air-conditioned interior.

Roma Bar (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 6729; 9-11 Cavenagh St; mains \$10; ☺ breakfast & lunch; ☑) This is a local (caffeine) institution with wireless Internet access (\$2.50 per hour), where you'll find many heads buried in newspapers, notebook computers or engaged in a discussion about the environment. There are some good vegetarian options on the menu and a whiff of the hippydom in the patronage – shame about the cigarette smoke, though.

Rendezvous Café (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 9231; Shop 6, Star Village Arcade, 32 Smith St Mall; mains \$5-12; ☺ lunch Mon-Sat, dinner Thu-Sat) Tucked away in a quiet arcade off Smith St, this Thai and Malaysian BYO has legendary laksa status.

Quick Eats

Mindil Beach Sunset Market (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 3454; off Gilruth Ave; ☺ 5-10pm Thu & 4-9pm Sun May-Oct) is a Darwin institution (see the boxed text p80) that draws huge crowds with its

multicultural array of Asian street food, pizzas, crepes, Australian native fauna (see the tastefully named Roadkill Café) and refreshing smoothies. There's something for everyone.

Indian Cafe (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 0752; 1/15 Knuckey St; mains \$7; ☺ lunch & dinner) This 'hole in the wall' curry joint has \$7 two-curries-and-rice meal deals. Select from half a dozen meat, vegan and vegetarian concoctions, and eat in on the laminex or take away.

Simply's (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 4765; Star Village Arcade, 32 Smith St Mall; mains \$5-10; ☺ lunch Mon-Fri) Serves simple healthy vegetarian/vegan food with flair. It has veggie burgers, salads, hot meals, smoothies and a variety of freshly pressed juices.

Bay Seafood Café (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 8789; 57 Marina Blvd, Cullen Bay; barra & chips \$9; ☺ lunch & dinner) A very popular 'fish 'n' chipper'. Team it with a crisp Greek salad (\$5) and take your steaming paper package down to the beach for sunset.

Cold Rock Ice Creamery (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 2668; Shop 33, Mitchell Centre, 55-59 Mitchell St; ice creams \$4-6; ☺ lunch & dinner) Reward yourself on a hot Darwin night with one of the multitude of creamy combinations at this popular chain.

Burnett House (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 0165; 4 Burnett Pl; \$7.50; ☺ Sun afternoon) Feeling peckish on a Sunday afternoon? Perhaps try the High Tea at Burnett House in the Myilly Point Heritage Precinct (p70) where you'll be served dainty sandwiches, delightful cakes and a pot of tea or coffee.

Self-Catering

There are three supermarkets in town. **Coles** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 8055; Mitchell Centre, 55-59 Mitchell St) is open 24 hours, while **Woolworths** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 6111; nr Cavenagh & Whitfield Sts) is open until midnight most nights. There's another **Woolworths** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 2864; 56 Smith St) near the corner of Smith and Knuckey Sts.

Parap Fine Foods (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 8597; 40 Parap Rd, Parap) is a local foodie haunt teaming with gourmet temptations, including organic and health foods.

DRINKING

Most of the bars popular with travellers are on Mitchell St, all within a short walk of each other.

Victoria Hotel (The Vic; Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 4011; 27 Smith St) This old, stone hotel has long been Darwin's favourite pub: a place where backpackers and locals mingle and party. The stylish street-level Settlers Bar is open from 10am and hosts live music most nights. Upstairs is Banjos where you will find pool tables, a balcony and occasional DJs. Banjos opens at 7pm when tour groups turn up.

Rorke's Drift (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 7171; 46 Mitchell St) Set in a former cinema with walls featuring memorabilia of the Zulu War, Rorke's has a certain colonial grandeur. There's over a dozen beers on tap, a menu that would feed an army and a great terrace in which to enjoy it all.

Deck Bar (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8942 3001; 22 Mitchell St) Over 20 beers on tap and many more in bottles, plus an excellent range of wines, many available by the glass, can all be enjoyed on a vast alfresco deck. You can also grab a meal here.

Top End Hotel (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 6511; nr Mitchell & Daly Sts) This busy little entertainment enclave has several clubs and bars, including Lizards Bar & Grill, which has a great beer garden and pulls in revellers of all ages for its big-screen sports broadcasts and weekend bands.

Darwin Ski Club (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 6630; Conacher St, Fannie Bay) This clubhouse for waterskiers has a great location on Vestey's Beach. It's a sublime spot to sink a cold ale (outside bar opens at noon) as the sun sets over the water. Interstate or international visitors get issued with a free membership.

Shenanigans (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 2100; 69 Mitchell St) To be sure it's an Irish theme pub, but the food is good and there's some form of entertainment most nights.

Other popular city watering holes:

Buzz Café (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 1141; The Slipway, Cullen Bay) Stylish waterfront café/bar/restaurant. Oh, so very relaxing.

Cavenagh (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 6383; www.the.cavenagh.com; 12 Cavenagh St) Insanely popular backpackers' bar just a stagger from their rooms.

Ducks Nuts Bar & Grill (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8942 2122; 76 Mitchell St) Swanky vodka bar with live entertainment and fine food.

ENTERTAINMENT

Darwin is a city of warm nights and numerous options. The nightclubs and live music venues in the CBD are close enough together

that you can take a wander to find one you like. Other tastes in entertainment are also catered for, with theatre, film and concerts.

You'll find up-to-date entertainment listings for live music and other attractions in the Friday edition of the *Northern Territory News*. For a more alternative scene, check out the walls at Relish or the Roma Bar (opposite) or pick up the free, widely distributed monthly publication *Fresh*. **Top End Arts** (www.topendarts.com.au) lists events happening around town and is available at the tourist information office. Keep an eye out for bills posted on notice boards and telegraph poles that advertise dance and full-moon parties.

Aboriginal Cultural Performances

Aboriginal Corroborees (☎ 8978 5044; adult/child \$60/30; ☺ Wed & Fri 7pm May-Jun; Mon, Wed & Fri 7pm Jul-Sep) This is an excellent dinner and show by the entertaining and exciting Kenbi Dancers, and is held just over the water at Mandorah Beach Hotel (see p89 for ferry information).

Live Music

Just about every pub/bar in town has some form of live music, mostly on Friday and Saturday nights. Some places also keep their microphones busy with karaoke and DJs on other nights.

Top End Hotel (Map pp66-7; ☎ 1800 626 151; fax 8941 1253; nr Mitchell & Daly Sts). Lizards Bar or the larger beachcombers venue host live bands from Friday to Sunday.

Victoria Hotel (The Vic; Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 4011; 27 Smith St Mall) A popular two-storey haunt off the Mall, which draws in a lively backpacker crowd. Live bands play downstairs in the Settlers Bar from Wednesday to Saturday.

Nirvana (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 2025; Smith St) Over Daly St, this is a cosy restaurant-bar with live jazz/blues every Thursday, Friday and Saturday night and a jam session every Tuesday. You must eat (mains \$15 to \$30) as you drink; bar snacks are available at reasonable prices.

Darwin Ski Club (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 6630; Conacher St, Fannie Bay) There's jazz at the open-air bar from 5.30pm on Friday and live music from 5pm on Sunday.

Ducks Nuts Bar & Grill (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8942 2122; www.ducksnuts.com.au; 76 Mitchell St) Sassy Sunday

sessions (2pm to 6pm) featuring blues and jazz.

Most of the ritzy hotels stretched out along the Esplanade have bars where you can sip to the sounds of tinkling ivories. The Jabiru Bar in the Novotel Atrium is one to try.

Nightclubs

Discovery & Lost Arc (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8942 3300; 89 Mitchell St; ☎ 9pm-late, Fri & Sat) Discovery is a popular dance venue where young things pulse to commercial anthems. Lost Arc is the dim blue bar at the front of the complex.

Throb (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 3358; 64 Smith St; admission \$10; ☎ from 10pm Thu-Sun) Throb is Darwin's premier gay- and lesbian-friendly nightclub and cocktail bar, where party-goers can enjoy regular drag shows and theme nights. Touring live acts sometimes play here.

Retro (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 6511; Top End Hotel, cnr Mitchell & Daly Sts; ☎ Tue, Fri & Sat) Retro is a large dance club that occasionally hosts live bands. It gets busy on Tuesdays when cheap drinks are on offer.

Cinemas

Deckchair Cinema (Map pp66-7; www.deckchaircinema.com; Kitchener Dr, Wharf Precinct; adult/child/family \$13/6/45; box office ☎ from 6.30pm Apr-Oct) During the Dry, the **Darwin Film Society** (☎ 8981 0700) runs this fabulous cinema near the Stokes Hill Wharf. Here you can watch a movie under the stars while reclining in a deckchair – bring a cushion for real comfort. Screenings are listed in the newspapers or on flyers around town.

Museum & Art Gallery Theatre (Map pp66-7; Conacher St, Fannie Bay; adult/concession \$13/10) The film society also has regular showings of offbeat and art-house films at the museum during the Wet season (see p65).

Darwin City Cinemas (Map pp66-7; ☎ 981 5999; 76 Mitchell St; adult/child \$14/10) This is the city's large cinema complex, screening the latest release blockbuster films across five theatres. Head down on Tropical Tuesday for \$9 entry (all day).

Theatre

Darwin Entertainment Centre (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8980 3333; www.darwinentertainment.com.au; 93 Mitchell St; box office ☎ 10am-5.30pm Mon-Fri & 1hr prior to shows) Houses the Playhouse and Studio Theatres, and hosts events from fashion-award

nights to plays, rock operas, comedies and concerts. Ring for bookings and 24-hour information.

Brown's Mart (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 5522; www.brownsmart.com.au; Harry Chan Ave) An historical venue that features live theatre performances. An arty crowd congregates here for Bamboo Lounge on selected Friday evenings, which may include anything from a short film festival to touring bands. It's all-inclusive, hassle-free and there's also a bar. Brown's Mart also hosts Darwin's Fringe Festival (see p75).

Casino

Skycity Darwin (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8943 8888; Gilruth Ave) On Mindil Beach, this is Darwin's flashy casino complex with accommodation and three restaurants. It has the full range of tools to help you lose your shirt; and to ensure you have one to lose there's a dress code, which means no singlets, thongs or dirty clothing.

Sport

There's quite a bit happening on the local sports scene, and Darwin sees occasional national and international cricket and football matches. The most significant international sporting event is the biennial Arafura Games (p75).

The major sports venue in Darwin is the Marrara Sporting Precinct (Map p64) in the northern suburbs. It is home to the **Northern Territory Football League** (www.aflnt.com.au), the local Australian Rules league, which has its season during the Wet. Check the website for teams and fixtures. There are occasional matches held against AFL teams.

Northern Territory Rugby Union (www.ntu.rugby.net.com.au) matches are played at Optus Park in Marrara Sporting Precinct. There's also a local Rugby League competition, and Northern Territory Soccer was getting a new home at Marrara at the time of writing. Petrol-heads cut loose at **Hidden Valley Motor Sports Complex** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8984 3469; Hidden Valley Rd, Berrimah), which hosts a round of the V8 Supercars.

SHOPPING

You'll find specialists shops for outdoor gear, cameras and film, books, fishing tackle, fashion clothing, and more in Darwin's CBD. Many chain stores are represented at

the large Casuarina Shopping Centre (Map p64). A visit to one of Darwin's fabulous outdoor markets (p80) is an 'essential' for all shopaholics.

Indigenous Arts & Crafts

The city centre has a good range of outlets selling arts and crafts from the Top End, such as bark paintings from Arnhem Land, and carvings and screen-printing by the Tiwi people of Bathurst and Melville Islands. It's worth having a browse in a couple of galleries to build some knowledge of artists and prices, and to recognise the regional differences in art.

Raintree Aboriginal Fine Art Gallery (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 9933; Shop 5, 20 Knuckey St) One of Darwin's original Aboriginal galleries, Raintree specialises in works from the western Arnhem Land region, and also features contemporary and traditional work from other regions.

Framed (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 2994; 55 Stuart Hwy, Stuart Park) Framed presents a fine range of arts and crafts in its gallery near the entrance to the Botanic Gardens. The eclectic and ever-changing range is typically Territorian and tropical, and includes contemporary Aboriginal art, pottery, jewellery and exquisitely carved furniture. All tastes are covered.

Maningrida Arts & Culture (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 4122; www.maningrida.com; Shop 1, 32 Mitchell St) Features didgeridoos, weavings and paintings from the Kunibidji community at Maningrida on the banks of the Liverpool River, Arnhem Land.

Aboriginal Fine Arts (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 1315; 1st fl, cnr Mitchell & Knuckey Sts) This gallery sells art from Arnhem Land and the Central Desert region, including the work of high-profile artists. There's a large selection of didgeridoos downstairs.

Mason Gallery (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 9622; Shop 7, 21 Cavenagh St) Features some acrylics from the Western Desert region and some fine bark paintings from Arnhem Land.

Territory Colours (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 1803; 21 Knuckey St) Contemporary paintings and crafts, including glass, porcelain and wood from local artists.

Accessories

Paspaley Pearls (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8982 5555; 19 Smith St Mall) A Darwin institution, Paspaley farms, crafts and sells top-quality pearls.

di Croco (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 4470; Paspaley Pearls Bldg, 19 Smith St Mall) A wide range of handbags, belts, wallets and accessories made from the skin of farmed salties.

Outdoor Equipment

NT General Store (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 8242; 42 Cavenagh St) For all your camping equipment needs, this is one of the best places with shelves piled high and friendly service. It also has a great range of maps (see p62).

Fishing & Outdoor World (☎ 8981 6398; 27 Cavenagh St) Easy to find with the artillery piece above the door, it has an extensive range of tackle, lures, rods and anything else you might need to hook a barra.

Gone Bush (☎ 0413 757 000; gonebush@octa4.net.au) Gone Bush hires out good quality camping gear at reasonable prices, including tents, stoves and eskeys, and will deliver to your accommodation. This makes an excellent option if you're planning your own trip to Kakadu and fancy doing it on the cheap at your own pace.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

See p273 for details of international flights in and out of Northern Territory.

Domestic flights connect Darwin with all other Australian capital cities, as well as Alice Springs, Jabiru (Kakadu), Broome, Cairns, Kununurra and various regions throughout the Top End. Prices quoted here are for low-end, one-way fares during the Dry. One-off prices on the web will often be cheaper.

Qantas (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au) has direct daily services to Adelaide (one way from \$400), Alice Springs (\$300), Brisbane (\$350), Cairns (\$340), Melbourne (\$400), Perth (\$500) and Sydney (\$360).

Virgin Blue (☎ 13 67 89; www.virginblue.com.au) flies daily direct to Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane for very similar prices.

Airnorth (☎ 1800 627 474; www.airnorth.com.au) services the Top End region, with daily flights to Broome (\$400), Gove/Nhulunbuy (\$270) and Kununurra (\$250).

Other, smaller routes are flown by local operators; ask a travel agent.

Boat

Sea Cat (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8978 5015; adult/child/family return \$18/9.50/50) runs a regular ferry service to

and from Mandorah (see p89). This company also runs the **Arafura Pearl** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 9696; seacat@bigpond.com; adult/child lower deck \$220/150, upper deck \$240/170; 🚢 Mon, Wed & Fri Mar-Nov) ferry to Bathurst Island (see p92). Both services depart from Cullen Bay ferry terminal.

Bus

You can reach/leave Darwin by bus on three routes: the Western Australian route to/from Kununurra via Katherine; the Queensland route to/from Mt Isa via Three Ways; or straight along the Track to/from Alice Springs and Adelaide. For further information on interstate bus travel see p275.

All long-distance bus services are operated by **Greyhound Australia** (☎ 13 14 99; www.greyhound.com.au; Transit Centre, 69 Mitchell St; 🚏 6am-3.45pm Mon-Fri, 6am-1.30pm Sat & Sun). At least one service per day travels up and down the Stuart Hwy. Buses depart from the rear of the Transit Centre and stop at various points down the Stuart Hwy, including: Batchelor (\$38, 1½ hours), Adelaide River (\$38, two hours), Pine Creek (\$55, 3½ hours), Katherine (\$70, 4½ hours), Mataranka (\$90, 6½ hours), Tennant Creek (\$185, 14 hours) and Alice Springs (\$260, 22 hours).

For Kakadu, there's a daily return service from Darwin to Cooina (\$60, six hours) via Jabiru (\$45, 3¾ hours).

Car & Motorcycle

There's a proliferation of budget car-rental operators in Darwin, and all the major companies are represented.

For driving around Darwin, conventional vehicles are cheap enough, but most companies offer only 100km free and around Darwin 100km won't get you very far. The prices invariably drop for longer rentals for both conventional and 4WD vehicles. See p281 for information on longer-term car and campervan rentals.

Rental companies, including the cut-price ones, generally operate a free towing or replacement service if a vehicle breaks down. But (especially with the cheaper operators) check the paperwork to see exactly what you're covered for in terms of damage to vehicles and injury to passengers. The usual age and insurance requirements apply in Darwin. There may be restrictions on off-bitumen driving, or the distance you're allowed to go. Even the big firms' insurance may not cover

you when driving off-bitumen, so make sure you know exactly what your liability is in the event of an accident. It is certainly worth taking out comprehensive insurance.

Nifty Rent-A-Car is about the cheapest there is, starting at \$35 per day with free 100km. There are also plenty of 4WD vehicles available in Darwin, but you usually have to book ahead, and fees and deposits are higher than for 2WD vehicles. Larger companies offer one-way rentals plus better mileage deals for more expensive vehicles.

Most rental companies are open every day and have agents in the city centre. Avis, Budget, Hertz and Thrifty all have offices at the airport.

Avis (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 9922; 89 Smith St)

Britz Australia (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 2081; 44 Stuart Hwy, Stuart Park)

Budget (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8981 9800; cnr Daly & Doctors Gully Rd)

Europcar (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 0300; 77 Cavenagh St)

Hertz (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 0944; cnr Smith & Daly Sts)

Nifty Rent-A-Car (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8941 7090; 86 Mitchell St) Also home to Advance Car Rentals.

Thrifty (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8924 0000; 64 Stuart Hwy, Stuart Park)

If you're trying to buy or sell an old clunker for the next leg of your journey, the **Travelers' Car Market** (Map pp66-7; ☎ 0418 600 830; Peel St; 🚏 8am-4pm) is just around the corner from Mitchell St.

Train

The famous *Ghan* train operates weekly (twice weekly May to July) between Adelaide and Darwin via Alice Springs. The Darwin terminus is located on Berrimah Rd, about 18km or 20 minutes from the city centre. A taxi fare into the centre is about \$30, though there is a shuttle service to/from the Transit Centre for \$10, as well as spruikers from various hostels waiting for potential customers to step off the train. See p277 for fare details. Bookings (recommended) can be made through **Trainways** (☎ 13 21 47; www.trainways.com.au).

GETTING AROUND

To/From the Airport

Darwin International Airport (Map p64; ☎ 8920 1805) is about 12km northeast of the centre of town, and handles both international and domestic flights. A taxi fare into the centre

is about \$20. **Darwin Airport Shuttle** (☎ 1800 358 945, 8981 5066) will pick up or drop off almost anywhere in the centre for \$8.50/17 one way/return. When leaving Darwin book a day before departure.

Public Transport

Darwinbus (Map pp66-7; ☎ 8924 7666; Harry Chan Ave; 🚏 info counter 8am-12.45pm & 1.45-5pm Mon-Fri) runs a comprehensive bus network that departs from the city bus interchange, opposite Brown's Mart. Buses enter the city along Mitchell St and leave along Cavenagh St.

Fares are on a zone system (one/six zones cost \$1.40/2.80). Daily and weekly Tourcards, available from all bus interchanges, some newsagencies and the tourist information office, offer unlimited travel. Daily adult/child cards cost \$5/2.50; seven-day cards cost \$25/12.50.

Bus 4 (to Fannie Bay, Nightcliff, Rapid Creek and Casuarina) and bus 6 (Fannie Bay, Parap and Stuart Park) are useful for getting to Aquascene, the Botanic Gardens, Mindil Beach, the Museum & Art Gallery, Fannie Bay Gaol Museum and East Point and the markets.

Bus 5 and 8 go along the Stuart Hwy past the airport (but not near the terminal building) to Berrimah, from where the 5 goes north to Casuarina and the 8 continues along the highway to Palmerston.

The **Tour Tub** (☎ 8985 6322; www.tourtub.com) minibus tours Darwin's sights throughout the day and you can hop on and off along the route (see p74).

Scooter

Darwin Scooter Hire (Map pp66-7; ☎ 0418 892 885; www.scoota.com.au; Mitchell St), opposite Shenanigans, rents out scooters for \$30/40 per two/four hours or \$50 per day. Two-seater scooters are also available for hire, along with bicycles (see p71).

Taxi

Taxis wait outside Woolworth's on Knuckey St, diagonally opposite the north end of Smith St Mall, and are usually easy to flag down. Phone **Darwin Radio Taxis** (☎ 13 10 08).

Arafura Shuttle (☎ 8981 3300) runs a convenient 24-hour, door-to-door, minibus service that will take you anywhere within the CBD, the northern suburbs, or Palmerston.

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